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CRIME

Palm Beach State College leaders applaud student tipster to mass shooting threats

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An anonymous Palm Beach State College student filed a tip that led to the arrest of Saul Allain Jean, a fellow student who is accused of making online posts that threatened to carry out a mass shooting and encouraged others to do the same.

In a notice to students, college leaders applauded the tipster for helping to stop a potential tragedy. Jean, a 24-year-old Miami-Dade resident, had threatened "one of the college's campuses," the message said.

But on Monday afternoon, Sgt. Jeanette Rivers, an investigator at the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, clarified that Jean made only broad comments about wanting to commit a "massacre."

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"I will commit mass (expletive) massacre & then kill myself," he is quoted as saying in the arrest report, which also states that Jean encouraged others to target Gov. Ron DeSantis and public beaches.

The comments were not specific to the college's Lake Worth Beach or Boca Raton campuses, where he attended classes, Rivers said.

Investigators were concerned, however, that Jean recently visited the Boca Raton campus on a day he had no scheduled classes or other "legitimate reason" to be there.

The sheriff's office charged him on Friday with written or electronic threats to conduct a mass shooting or an act of terrorism.

He had no weapons at the time of his arrest, Rivers said, but he recently shared a picture online of what appears to be a \$1,407 bank account balance, along with another post asking, "who's selling an AR-15?"

During his initial appearance in front of County Judge Ted Booras on Saturday morning, Jean had to be removed after being "disruptive," according to court documents.

And as of Tuesday, Jean — who also has two open battery cases in Miami-Dade County — remained in the Palm Beach County Jail on a \$1 million bond.

"This case, there's no question in my mind, saved lives," Col. Robert Allen said on Monday, during a news conference at the college's Lake Worth Beach campus.

Jean reportedly shared 'paranoid' posts on petition website

Threats are commonly posted on social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, despite attempts by the platforms to ban such comments.

But in an unusual move, investigators say Jean made the alarming posts on change.org, a site that allows users to launch petitions for issues they care about.

"He felt that the federal government was watching him," Rivers said. "He had some paranoid statements made."

Jean titled his petition, "Discrimination/Hate Crime Against Saulomon Grundy," according to the arrest report.

There is a supervillain named Solomon Grundy in comic books published by DC Comics. The publisher describes Grundy as an undead monster who is "powerful, immortal and bad news for every hero unfortunate enough to cross his path."

It appears Jean adopted the character's name as his own.

Though the petition is no longer available on change.org, The Palm Beach Post accessed an archive of the website, which shows a petition with the same title as the one listed in Jean's arrest report.

The author is listed as "Saul Jean." In that petition, the author describes himself as an artist who uses music to "escape from reality."

"I'm a simple dude who loved to express himself through his music under a villainous alter ego, (which is just one character) hence why I went under the 'Solomon Grundy' moniker," the petition reads.

The petition's author goes on to say that an "external force" was trying to control his music on digital streaming platforms, and that people were gang-stalking him, drugging his food and impersonating him "in order to commit other crimes."

"Everyone that is aware of my existence who has a hidden agenda against me are in on this. I need assistance because I cannot do it all alone," the author wrote, urging people to sign his petition.

Jean made no threats in the petition itself. Instead, he posted a series of comments under a section that's typically used to update supporters on the petition's progress, the arrest report says.

"There's a reason why terrorist attacks happen," one comment reads. "It's the (expletive) federal government."

"I ain't going to Jail," another states. "I'm going straight to the fiery pits after I'm done."

Officials share united message: 'If you see something, say something'

Ava Parker, the president of Palm Beach State College, praised the student who brought Jean's alleged threats to light, and the president urged others to do the same when they see suspicious activity.

"We applaud you and thank you for saying something, and for your quick actions to safeguard our Panther community," she said. "On behalf of all our students, faculty and staff, we say thank you."

College and law-enforcement leaders then shared several resources where people can flag possible threats in schools and the community.

Call 911 if there's imminent danger.

Report threats and suspicious activity to the sheriff's office by downloading the PBSO ConnectProtect smartphone application or by visiting the online tip page at pbso.org/see-something-say-something.

Download the FortifyFL phone application or visit the website, getfortifyfl.com, to choose from a list of K-12 schools in Florida and report possible threats affecting the campuses.

Regenia Herring, executive director of the Palm Beach Criminal Justice Commission, also pointed to a county website that lists resources for people struggling with their mental health or with substances.

Those resources, along with a list of warning signs and concerning behaviors, can be found at awareandcarepbc.com.

"We know mental health here, across our nation, is an issue," she said. "We're still dealing with the pandemic. And our goal is to have resources and options for people to get help."

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